



Home Office

Research and analysis

How many refugees are in employment?

Published 27 November 2025

Applies to England and Wales

Contents

1. How does refugee employment rate change with increasing time in the UK?
2. How does the employment rate change over time for asylum route refugees compared to those arriving on resettlement schemes?
3. How does the employment rate for men and women vary?
4. How does employment rate change over time by age group?
5. How does employment vary by nationality?



© Crown copyright 2025

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/refugee-integration-outcomes-rio-employment-from-2015-to-2023/how-many-refugees-are-in-employment>

The Home Office and Office for National Statistics have linked Home Office refugee data to the HMRC PAYE-RTI (Pay As You Earn Real Time Information) dataset to determine if someone was in employment each year and how many years that was after they were granted refugee status. If there was a PAYE-RTI entry for a year, we considered an individual to be in employment. If there was no PAYE-RTI entry for a year, we considered the individual to not be in employment for that year. Note that those considered unemployed may include those who are not able to work due to disability or long-term illness and would otherwise be considered economically inactive. PAYE-RTI can only tell us about employment. It cannot tell us about self-employment. If someone did not have a record in the PAYE-RTI dataset, we considered them not employed but that does not necessarily mean they were not working.

The groups covered by the statistics shown here are:

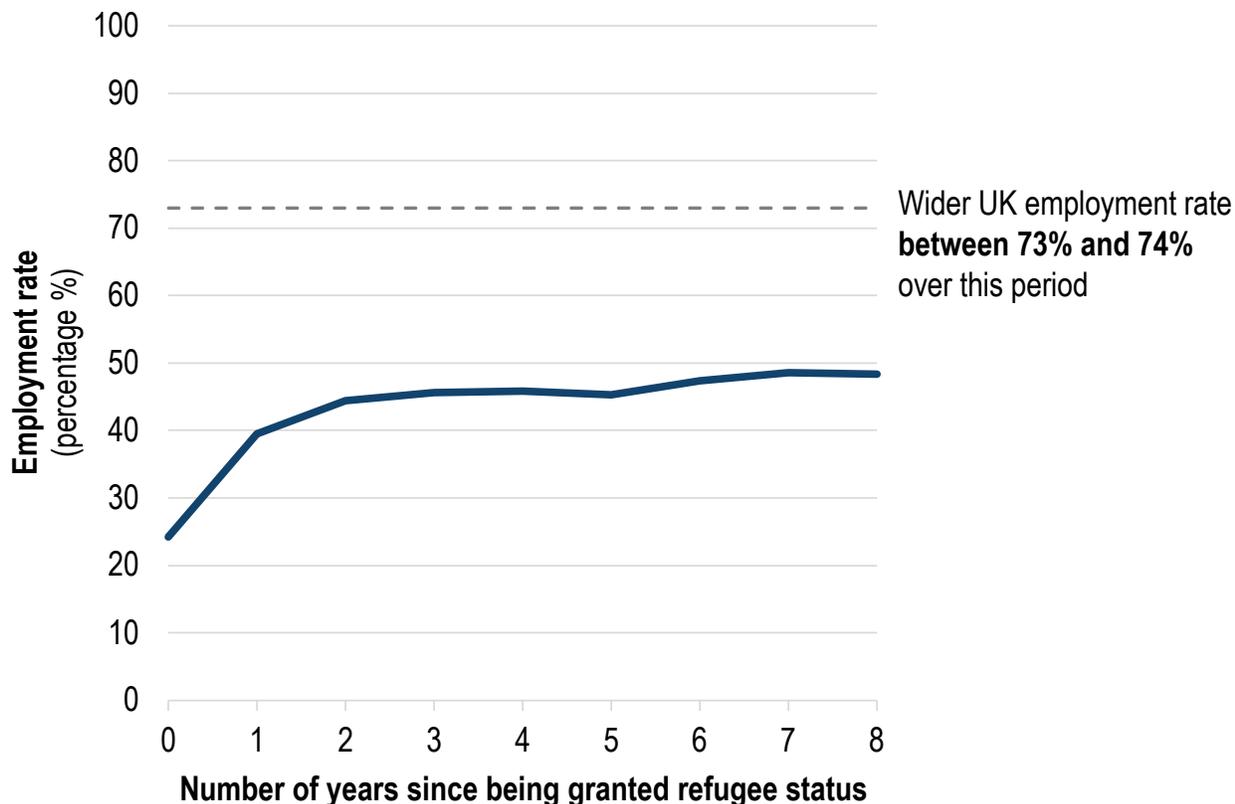
- refugees who were granted asylum in the period 2015 to 2023
- refugees who were resettled into the UK under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS)
- refugees who were resettled to the UK under the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)
- small numbers of refugees who were resettled to the UK under the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) Pathway 2

These groups represent a subset of refugees in England and Wales and findings from this study should not be used to make inferences about the wider refugee population or those granted other forms of protection. Official statistics on asylum and resettled refugees are available in regularly published [Home Office Asylum and resettlement datasets](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/asylum-and-resettlement-datasets>).

Further information about these statistics and the demographic breakdowns of the groups covered are included in [About this release](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/refugee-integration-outcomes-rio-employment-from-2015-to-2023/about-this-release) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/refugee-integration-outcomes-rio-employment-from-2015-to-2023/about-this-release>).

1. How does refugee employment rate change with increasing time in the UK?

Figure 1: Employment rate of people aged 16 to 64 years granted refugee status in the period 2015 to 2023 by number of years since being granted refugee status, England and Wales



Source: Home Office VPRS, VCRS, and asylum refugee data linked to HMRC PAYE-RTI data, the Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) Project

Notes:

1. Wider UK employment rate comes from [ONS Labour Market Statistics Time Series](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/lf24/lms) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/lf24/lms>).
2. n = 170,150 unique individuals.

Almost a quarter (24%) of refugees aged 16 to 64 years who were granted refugee status between 2015 and 2023 found employment in the first year in

which they arrived in the UK (0 years after arrival).

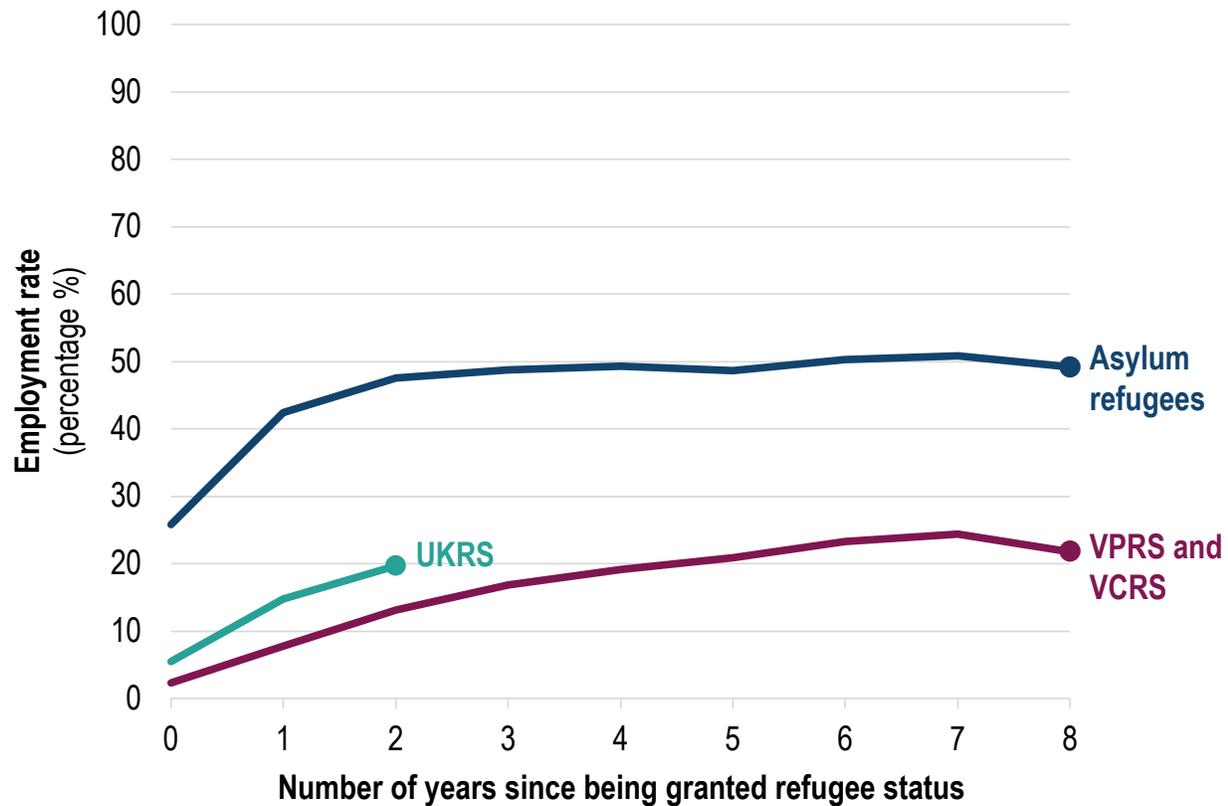
The rate of employment reached around 45% after 2 years and then increased more slowly to 48% for those who had refugee status for 8 years.

The wider UK employment rate for those aged 16 to 64 years given by the [ONS Labour Market Statistics Time Series](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/lf24/lms) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/lf24/lms>) was between 73% and 74% over this period.

Of regular migrants that come to live in England and Wales, 78% of those born in the EU and 65% of those born in non-EU countries were in employment in 2023 according to [ONS Migration and the labour market, England and Wales](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/migrationandthelabourmarketenglandandwales/census2021) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/migrationandthelabourmarketenglandandwales/census2021>).

2. How does the employment rate change over time for asylum route refugees compared to those arriving on resettlement schemes?

Figure 2: Employment rate of people aged 16 to 64 years granted refugee status in the period 2015 to 2023 by number of years since being granted refugee status and arrival route, England and Wales



Source: Home Office VPRS, VCRS, and asylum refugee data linked to HMRC PAYE-RTI data, the Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) Project

Notes:

1. n = 150,845 unique asylum refugees, 16,595 unique refugees resettled via the Vulnerable Persons and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Schemes (VPRS and VCRS), and 2,630 refugees resettled via the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS).
2. Refugees resettled under ACRS pathway 2 are not included in this graph in accordance with statistical disclosure control rules.
3. The UKRS is the current refugee resettlement scheme that was launched in 2021 therefore only 2 years of data is available for this cohort.

Employment rates were much lower for refugees who arrived via resettlement schemes than for refugees who were granted refugee status after applying through the asylum system. Refugees who arrived on resettlement schemes were selected for resettlement on the basis of need and vulnerability, so it may be expected that they were not as able to enter the labour market as asylum refugees.

A quarter (26%) of asylum refugees aged 16 to 64 years were in employment within the same calendar year they were granted refugee status.

From 2 years after being granted refugee status onwards, the employment rate of asylum refugees remained stable between 48% and 51%.

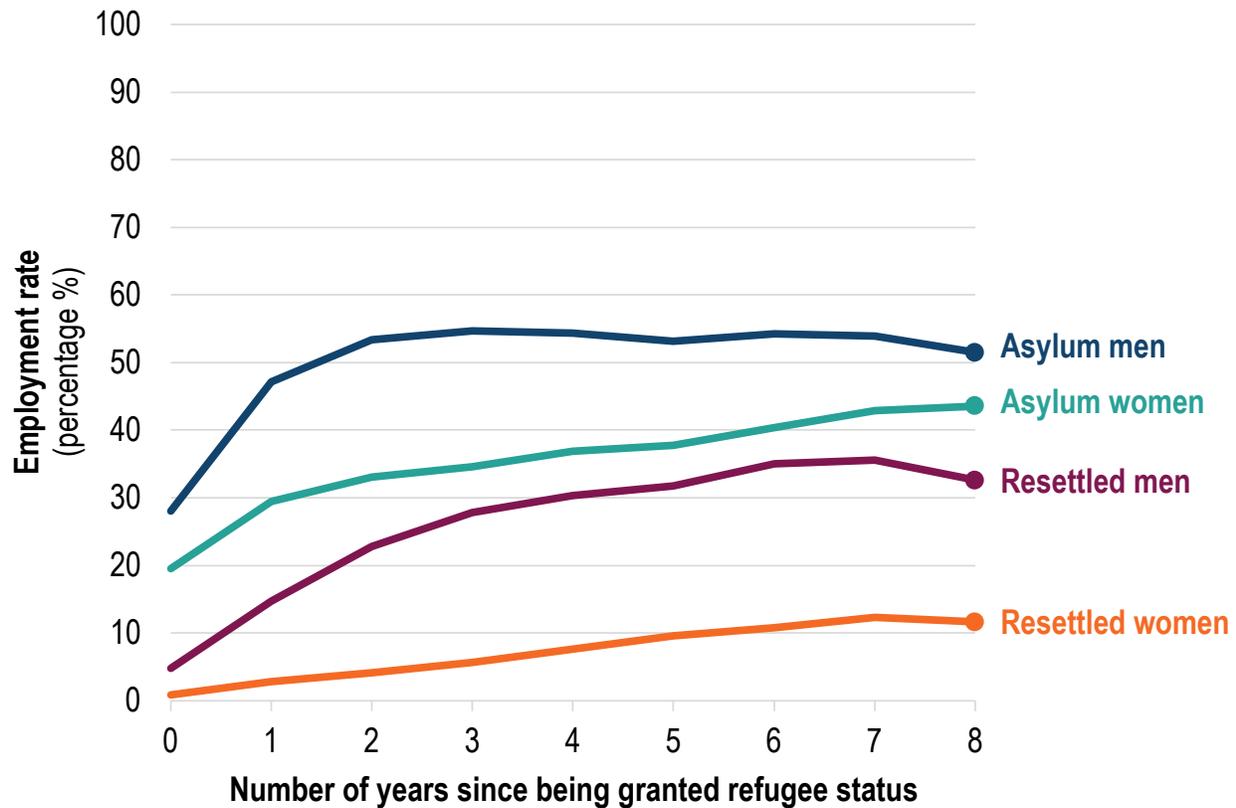
Less than 3% of resettled refugees found employment in the first year they arrived in the UK. This group would be expected to be vulnerable and in need of support due to the design of the resettlement scheme in operation at this time.

The employment rate of resettled refugees grew more steadily with increasing time in the UK reaching a peak of 24% of people in employment 7 years after arriving in the UK. The slight dip for the 8-year cohort is likely to reflect differences in composition of those arriving in particular years.

When we disaggregate the resettlement schemes, we can see that those who arrived on the UKRS showed better early outcomes than those who arrived via the VPRS / VCRS with 20% having found employment 2 years after arriving in the UK.

3. How does the employment rate for men and women vary?

Figure 3: Employment rate of people aged 16 to 64 years granted refugee status in the period 2015 to 2023 by number of years since being granted refugee status, arrival route, and sex, England and Wales, 2015 to 2023



Source: Home Office VPRS, VCRS, and asylum refugee data linked to HMRC PAYE-RTI data, the Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) Project

Notes:

1. n = 103,430 unique asylum men, 41,395 unique asylum women, 9,935 unique resettled men, 9,355 unique resettled women in the period 2015 to 2023.
2. Resettled refugees include those resettled under the VPRS and VCRS, UKRS, and the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) Pathway 2.

Employment rates were higher for asylum refugee men than refugee women initially, but the difference narrows to a degree as refugees spend longer in the UK.

Asylum refugee men reached over 50% after 2 years and maintained that level thereafter, whereas asylum refugee women more gradually increased to 44%, 8 years after being granted refugee status.

The employment rate for resettled men gradually increased to a high of 36%, 7 years after obtaining refugee status.

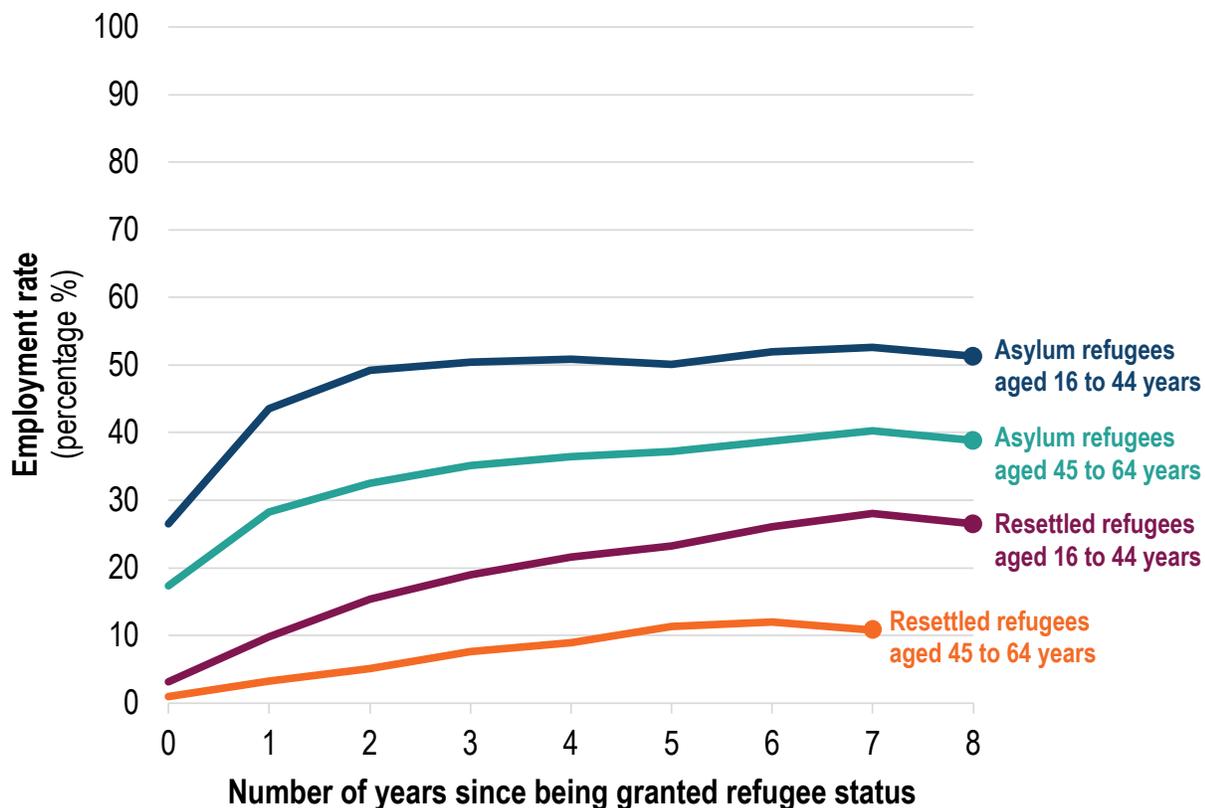
The increase in the employment rate over time for resettled women was slow, peaking at only 12%, 7 years after arrival. Our [previous research](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/refugee-integration-outcomes-rio-insights/refugee-integration-outcomes-rio-insights-embarks-economic-activity-and-housing-between-2015-and-2021>) suggests that the main reason for low employment among resettled refugee women was looking after home and family, but studying and long-term illness or disability were also factors.

The wider UK employment rate for those aged 16 to 64 years given by the [ONS Labour Market Statistics Time Series](https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/lf24/lms) (<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/lf24/lms>) was approximately 78% for men and ranged between 69% to 72% for women over the same period.

4. How does employment rate change over time by age group?

Figure 4: Employment rate of people aged 16 to 64 years granted refugee status in the period 2015 to 2023 by number of years since being granted refugee status, arrival route, and age category, England and Wales



Source: Home Office VPRS, VCRS, and asylum refugee data linked to HMRC PAYE-RTI data, the Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) Project

Notes:

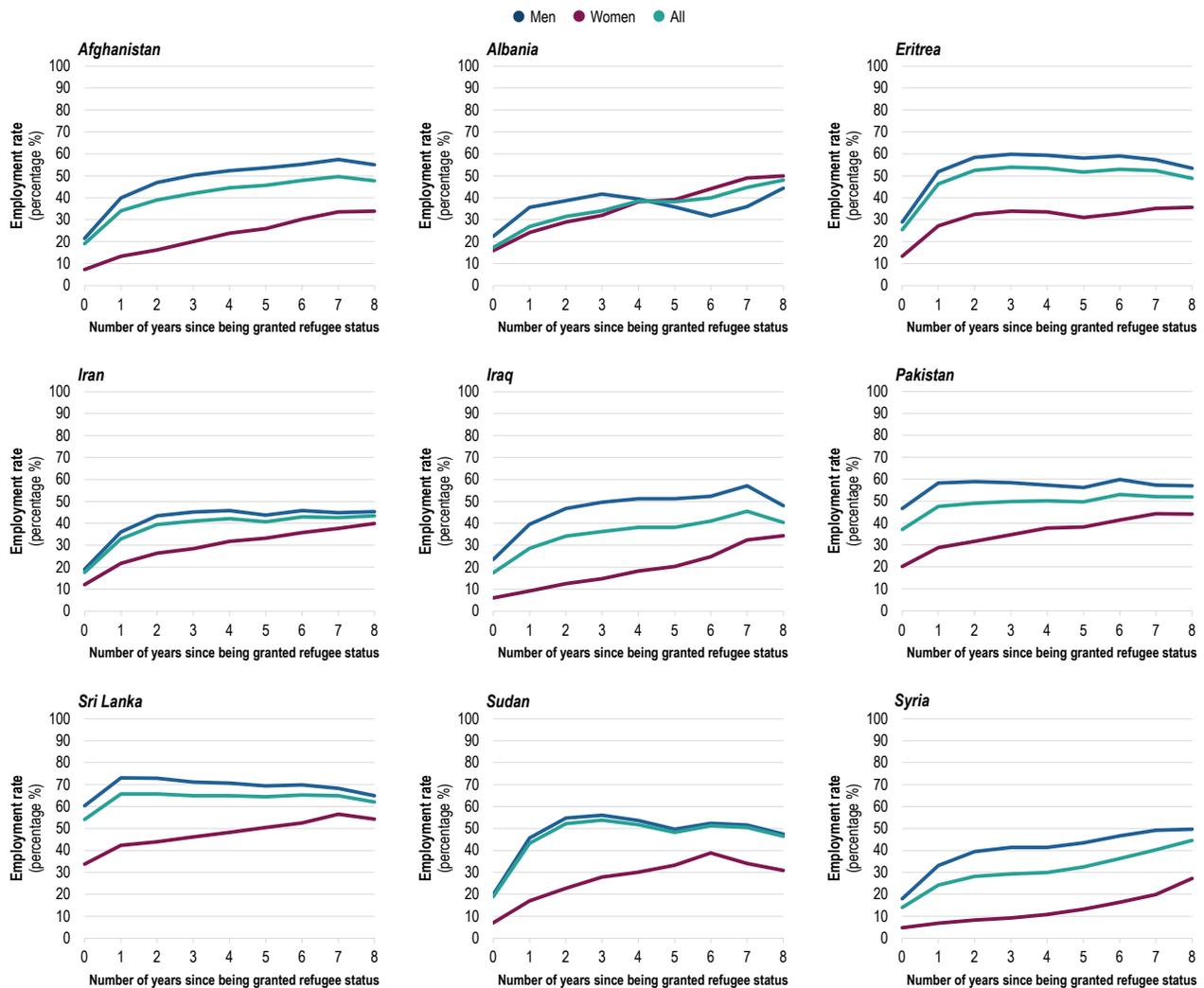
1. The point at 8 years for resettled refugees aged 45 to 64 years has been removed in accordance with statistical disclosure control rules.

The employment rate was highest among asylum refugees aged 16 to 44 years, which reached 50% after 3 years and remained here thereafter. Asylum refugees aged 45 to 64 years had a slightly lower employment rate reaching a high of 40% after 7 years of being a refugee.

Resettled refugees of both age categories had lower employment rates; both age categories started at much lower level (below 5%). Resettled refugees aged 16 to 44 years eventually reached employment rates of 27% after 8 years, however those aged 45 to 64 years reached only 12% after 6 years since being resettled.

5. How does employment vary by nationality?

Figure 5: Employment rate of people aged 16 to 64 years granted refugee status in the period 2015 to 2023 by number of years since being granted refugee status and nationality, England and Wales



Source: Home Office VPRS, VCRS, and asylum refugee data linked to HMRC PAYE-RTI data, the Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) Project

Notes:

1. Only the top 9 nationalities by count are represented here.
2. n = 16,275 Afghanistan; 4,120 Albania; 18,505 Eritrea; 29,460 Iran; 8,550 Iraq; 7,290 Pakistan; 4,740 Sri Lanka; 13,185 Sudan; 28,405 Syria.

Overall, refugees from Sri Lanka had the highest employment rate within the year they were granted refugee status (54%) which increased to over 60% one year later and remained at that level thereafter.

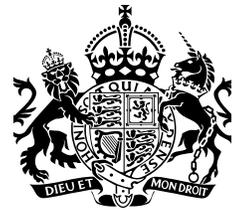
Refugees from Pakistan also had high rates of employment, increasing to 50%, 2 years after being granted refugee status and staying there.

After 8 years since being granted refugee status, employment rates settled between 40% to 50% for all other nationalities.

The employment rate for men was higher across all nationalities than for women except for Albanian men, where the employment rate for women overtook the employment rate for men 5 years after being granted refugee status. The employment rate for women of all nationalities increased more gradually compared with men.

**OGI**

All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright